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Food and Home Notes

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION WASHINGTON, D. C.

January 15, 1973



When making a cheese omelet, add the shredded cheese after the omelet is partially cooked--just before folding.

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You can reduce the number of calories in a serving of piecrusts by using less fat or by making the crust with oil, according to USDA home economists.

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Making blue or roquefort cheese dressing? For fewer calories, use $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of a cup sour half and half, or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup yogurt in place of sour cream. There's about 30 calories per tablespoon using half and half--about 20 calories if you use yogurt.

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What is enriched all-purpose flour? It is the kind usually sold for home use and is suitable for most home baking. Generally, it is a blend of hard and soft wheat flours, but it can be milled entirely from soft wheat.

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Beaten eggs act as leavening agents in baking--they also add color, flavor and nutritive value to baked products.

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Heating several blocks of frozen food? Don't stack them--just use a wider pan. Surface space in what you need.

PLAN NOW

---To Be A Minigardener

Too early to be concerned about the garden? Perhaps--but not too early to think about having your own minigarden for vegetables this summer. All you need is a windowsill (balcony or doorstep)--a few containers (an old basket or bucket will do!), some synthetic soil, and some seeds, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service.

Decide which vegetables you'd like to grow--Tomatoes probably offer the largest edible return for your time and effort, if you have a sunny spot. A ten inch pot of plastic, metal or wood will serve--add soil and seeds and you're a minigardener.

Synthetic soil is a wise choice because it is free of plant disease organisms and weed seeds, it holds moisture and plant nutrients well, and it is very lightweight and portable. Don't buy last years seeds, buy top quality.

Vegetables need a water supply equal to about one inch of rain every week during the growing season. Proper drainage is important; don't over-water. Plants can die from lack of oxygen--don't let the soil become waterlogged. If you want---transplant those little minigardens into larger pots for the balcony or doorstep in the spring.

ALMOST ALL ABOUT

----- GREENS

What's your greens quotient?

It's not a golf score or a new math test. It's merely a way of gauging how much variety you put into meals by serving different salad and cooking greens.

Take the test by simple division. Divide the number of times you serve greens a week (or a month) by the number of kinds of greens you serve. If the answer is the same as the number of servings...your greens quotient is dull. It's time to study the wide variety of salad and cooking greens available at the produce counter. Here's some advice on varieties and quality from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

There are two basic groups of greens, salad greens and cooking greens. Here are the types you might find for use in salads:

There are four types of lettuce: Iceberg, butter-head, Romaine, and leaf. Iceberg is a crisp lettuce that grows in large, round, solid heads. It has medium-green outer leaves and lighter green inner leaves and lends itself well to slicing, quartering, or wedging. Romaine also is a crisp lettuce. It is a tall, cylindrical plant with dark-green leaves in a loosely folded head.

Butter-head lettuce includes varieties such as Boston or Bibb lettuce. These types of lettuce have smaller heads than Iceberg. Heads are usually slightly flat on top. Leaves of this type lettuce are soft and succulent. They are light green and grow in a rosette pattern.

The many leaf lettuce varieties form clusters of leaves rather than heads. Leaves are broad, tender, succulent, and vary from curly to fairly smooth, and in shade of green, according to variety.

Chicory, endive, and escarole are members of the Chicory family of greens--sometimes their names are used interchangeably. This can be confusing to the shopper--but there are characteristics you can check. Chicory is sold in loosely fanned heads of green; it has curly or crinkly leaves with narrow notched edges.

Although most people think of endive as a white plant, the crinkly chicory is sometimes called endive. Belgian Endive or Witlook is the variety that is creamy white. It grows in a tight, cigar-shaped head. To prevent the plant from becoming green, it is grown in complete darkness. Belgian endive is used raw as a salad; served with just a dressing. Another member of the chicory tribe is escarole its green leaves are broad and slightly crinkly. Chicory and escarole are good in salads or may be served as cooked vegetables.

Watercress is a small round-leaved plant that is prized for salads and as a garnish because of its spicy flavor.

Dandelion leaves are dark green and have saw-toothed edges. Their similarity to chicory stems from the relationship of both dandelion and chicory to the sunflower family.

Then, there's spinach. Spinach, like dandelion greens, is usually thought of as a cooking green. But it's often used in salads, too.

USDA marketing specialists say a good bright color indicates good quality in salad greens--the shade of green depends on the variety. All should look fresh, not wilted or brown on the edges.

There are many varieties of cooking greens; spinach, kale, collards, turnip tops, mustard, broccoli, dandelion, and beet tops and chard. With the exception of beet tops and chard, these greens have bright or dark green leaves. Beet tops and some varieties of chard have reddish-green leaves.

Young, tender greens with a healthy color are good quality cooking greens. When shopping for cooking greens, avoid leaves with coarse stems or those that look soft, wilted or dried. Greens also should be free from insects or blemishes.

Most salad greens will keep in the refrigerator for a week or more. Watercress will keep only for one or two days. Most cooking greens can be kept in the refrigerator from two to three days to a week. All greens should be kept as cold as possible without freezing. Remember--more than one green can be used in salads or for cooking. Add them up and lower your greens quotient. A low score wins.



BROILER-FRYERS ARE PLENTIFUL IN FEBRUARY

BRAISED CHICKEN WITH VEGETABLES



1/2 cup flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
3-pounds ready-to-cook
broiler-fryer chicken,
cut-up
3 tablespoons fat or oil

3/4 cup hot water
1/2 teaspoon salt
1-1/2 cups sliced carrots
3 cups sliced celery
3/4 cup finely chopped onion
3/4 cup chopped green pepper

Combine flour, 1 teaspoon salt, and pepper; coat chicken pieces with mixture. Brown chicken in hot fat in large frypan. Drain excess fat from pan. Add water and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover tightly and simmer 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until chicken is almost tender. Add vegetables and cook 20 to 30 minutes longer, or until vegetables are tender. Yields 6 servings.

PEANUTS AND PEANUT PRODUCTS ARE PLENTIFUL IN FEBRUARY

"Please pass the peanuts" is the password this month.

Peanut butter-honey sauce for super sundaes.

Peanut butter milk shakes...anytime.

Peanut butter pie...for elegance.

Peanut filled muffins and biscuits.

Peanut butter gravy for pork perfection.

Peanut butter sauce for vegetable glamour.

Peanut butter sandwiches -- grilled and hot.

Peanut brickle frosting for a yellow cake.

Peanut butter soup for a cold day.

Peanut granules in hot rice...a surprise!

And many, many more.



COMMENTS & INQUIRIES TO:

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